

VZCZCXRO8612
PP RUEHDBU RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHNP RUEHROV RUEHSL RUEHSR
DE RUEHBS #0141/01 0361707
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 051707Z FEB 10 ZDK CTG SVC RUEHSD #0018 0370339
FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9980
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHJB/AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA PRIORITY 0060
RUEHLGB/AMEMBASSY KIGALI PRIORITY 0460
RUEHKB/AMEMBASSY KINSHASA PRIORITY 0579
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEFDHN/DIA DH WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BRUSSELS 000141

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/WE AND AF/C:WOLPE, KEITH, YELLIN, LAMORA, AND
CASEY
TREASURY FOR OIA AND TFI

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/04/2029

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [CG](#) [RW](#) [BY](#) [BE](#)

SUBJECT: BELGIAN FM VANACKERE'S JAN 18-25 TRIP TO CENTRAL
AFRICA

BRUSSELS 00000141 001.3 OF 002

Classified By: Acting Political-Economic Counselor Robert Kiene, reason
1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: MFA Congo Desk Officer Hugues Chantry provided a readout February 1 of Belgian FM Vanackere's January 18-25 trip to the Central African nations of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Rwanda, and Burundi. Vanackere met the presidents and foreign ministers of all three countries. The GOB is particularly pleased the meeting with DRC President Joseph Kabila went well. Vanackere said he would focus on "quiet, normal relations," unlike his predecessor Karl De Gucht, whose critical statements led to troubled relations between Belgium and the DRC. Chantry said the current coalition government wants to maintain calm bilateral relations with all three Central African countries. Belgium will focus on improving bilateral ties through the DRC's June 30, 2010 celebration of its fifty years of independence from Belgium and through Belgium's rotating EU presidency (July 1 - December 31, 2010). In Burundi, FM Vanackere privately stressed the importance of holding a successful election in summer 2010. End Summary.

DRC

¶2. (C) Improving bilateral relations between Belgium and the DRC is a major priority for the GoB. FM Vanackere's goal is to adopt, "quiet, normal relations," rather than the strongly critical "megaphone diplomacy" adopted by his predecessor Karl De Gucht. Chantry said Belgian internal politics requires a rapprochement after the rough De Gucht years for purely "internal" historical and political reasons. Chantry noted that Kabila extended a personal verbal invitation to the Belgian King to attend the fifty-year celebration of Congolese independence from Belgium on June 30, 2010. FM Vanackere said the government was seriously considering the invitation in his February 3 brief to Parliament. Chantry predicts the GOB will agree to the request, which is very important to Kabila. Chantry said the GoB was informed it could reopen its consulate in Bukavu in the next few months. (Note: the consulate was closed after former FM De Gucht's strong criticism of Kabila in April 2008. End Note.)

¶3. (C) FM Vanackere also met with the president of the electoral commission in Kinshasa. The GoB's analysis is that the planning for the 2011 elections is disorganized. The

GoDRC is looking for funding internally. Chantry opined that the DRC would realize it needed outside funding, but wait to ask until it was too late. He suggested the international community would need to plan for the contingency of coming to the GoDRC's assistance by having emergency funding available in 2011.

¶4. (C) The MFA is now considering the complications for Belgium of managing its bilateral relations with the DRC and EU relations as well during Belgium's July 1-December 31, 2010 rotating EU Council Presidency. The GOB has not decided whether Belgium will take the lead in EU-DRC relations in Kinshasa, or allow the EU delegation to represent the EU. Chantry said allowing the EU delegation to take the lead could allow Belgium to maintain its own bilateral relations in a different vein, rather than delivering possibly harsher EU views during a period when Belgium is trying to rebuild the relationship.

¶5. (C) NOTE - MESSAGE FOR WASHINGTON: Chantry asked that the following points be shared as a message to Washington. The GOB views FM Vanackere's trip to the DRC as a success. FM Vanackere now has personal ties with the GoDRC. Belgium once again has diplomatic tools in the DRC at its disposal. He also asked that AF/C and the State Great Lakes Team consider the opportunity that the DRC's coming debt forgiveness represents. The international community could work on the GoDRC to move forward on structural reforms along with the debt forgiveness. The GoB would like to avoid the same situation as the 1970s debt forgiveness in which the GoDRC simply spent the extra money. Chantry thinks the international community must convince the DRC the money cannot be spent well without governmental reform. END NOTE.

BRUSSELS 00000141 002.3 OF 002

Burundi

¶6. (C) FM Vanackere stressed the importance of holding a successful election, and made clear that neither Burundi nor the international community could accept a failed election. He also urged the GoB to deal with gangs of youth that are currently intimidating the opposition. Chantry said the Burundian government continues to listen closely to the GOB and can still be influenced by the international community.

Rwanda

¶7. (C) FM Vanackere had a two-hour meeting with Rwandan President Paul Kagame. Chantry described it as a very open exchange, in which all subjects were broached, including the GoR's treatment of its opposition. Vanackere also met business organizations,
a

n a nh@Jp@RC relations, we
cannottners to deliver toughcan leaders; they wilQU, and other internati at leas
t until
after tpresidency ends in DecembQ until after the BelgiQs in summer 2011. Thein
g
to be critical i GoDRC officials.

GUTMQ